

# Labour Market Flows to European Football

## Findings from the Professional Football Players' Observatory

***Raffaele Poli***

*International Center for Sports Studies, Institute of Geography, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland*

**Conference, 'Feet drain': an opportunity for players and a loss for nations?  
Birbeck Sport Business Centre, 1st May 2008**



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# The Professional Football Players' Observatory

- ✓ Set up in 2005 by the International Centre for Sports Studies (University of Neuchâtel) and the Center of Study and Research on Sport (University of Franche-Comté)
- ✓ Longitudinal analysis of the workings of the football players' labour market
- ✓ Implementation of a database consisting of the number of players taking part in the five major European leagues (the English Premier League, the Spanish Primera Liga, the Italian Serie A, the French Ligue 1 and the German Erste Bundesliga) + Champions League
- ✓ Setting up of indicators that allow for both the spatial (between countries) and temporal (between the seasons) comparison of the European football players' labour market
- ✓ Three main thematics: training of players, international recruitment, players' mobility

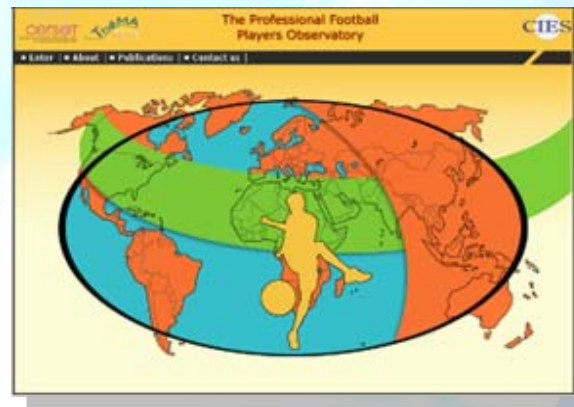


# The Professional Football Players' Observatory

- ✓ Yearly publication of the Annual Review of the European Football Players' Labour Market (bilingual, English-French)



- ✓ Set up of a website: [www.eurofootplayers.org](http://www.eurofootplayers.org)



# The Professional Football Players' Observatory

## Current developments

- ✓ to include the Champions League in the analysis and produce a special Champions League report.
- ✓ to include the managers in the analysis in developing new indicators.
- ✓ to test linear correlations between indicators (i.e. percentage of full internationals) and sporting results (average number of points per match)
- ✓ to elaborate a ranking of clubs according to the sustainability of their squad's management (training of players, number of signings, mobility rate, sporting results, ...)
- ✓ to elaborate special club-driven reports highlighting the main features of successful teams (in collaboration with Scout7)
- ✓ to deepen the collaboration with the football governing bodies (FIFA, UEFA, EPFL, ...) and the players' Unions (FIFPRO, ...).
- ✓ to enlarge the scope of the sample



# Foreign Players in the “big five” European Leagues

## Who is qualified as a foreign player?

- ✓ A "foreign" player has arrived in the country of the club that employs him within the framework of labour migration (moving with the ball).
- ✓ The origin of the player is defined according to the country where he has been at least initially trained and not according to his nationality(ies).

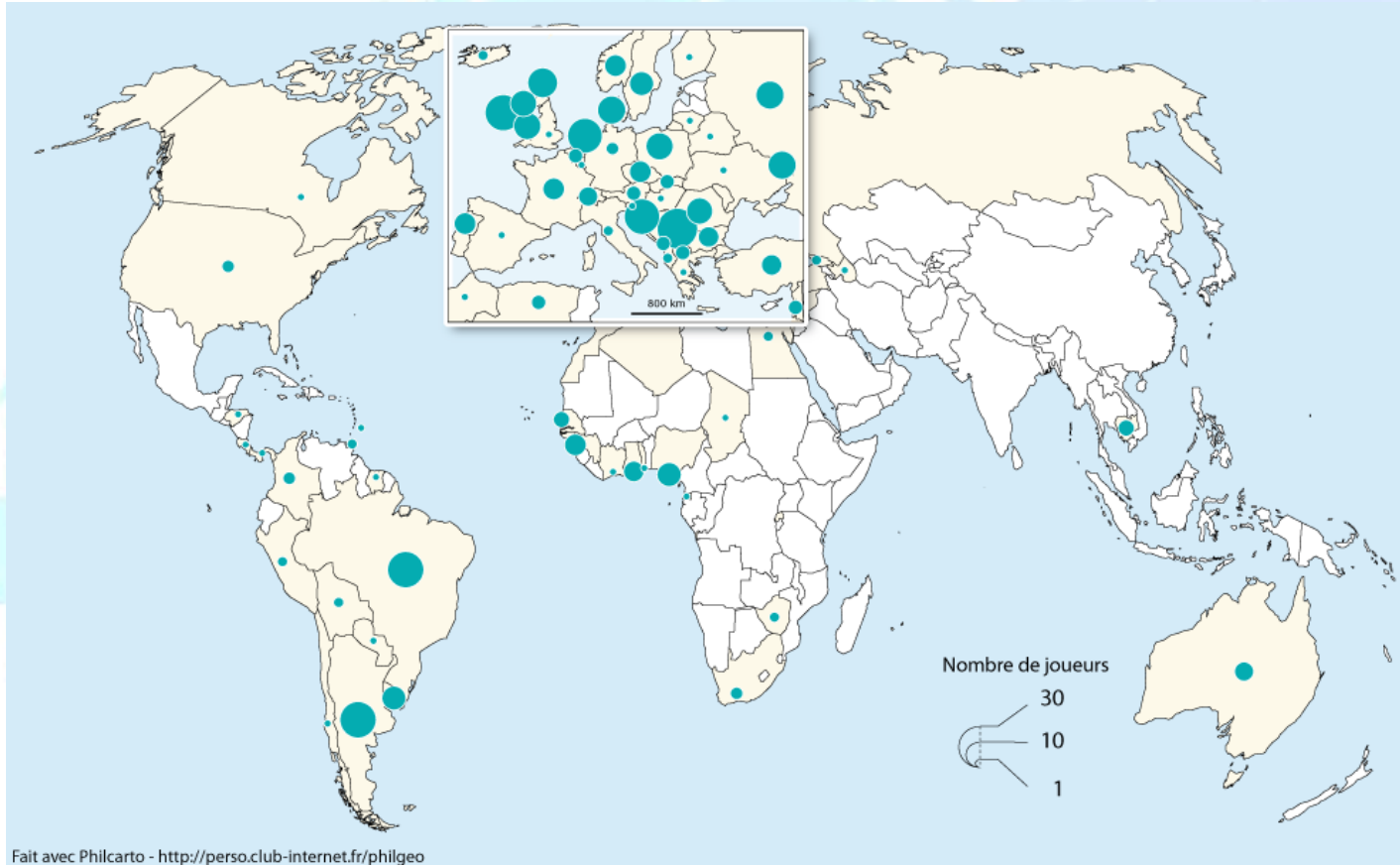
## Examples

- ✓ Didier Drogba, born in the Ivory Coast, migrated in France as a child (5 years old),  
Origin: France
- ✓ Emmanuel Adebayor, born in Togo, recruited by FC Metz as a teenager (15 years old),  
Origin: Togo
- ✓ Owen Hargreaves, born in Canada, recruited by Bayern Munich as a teenager, playing for England, Origin: Canada



# Foreign Players in the “big five” European Leagues

## The foreign presence in Europe (1995/1996)

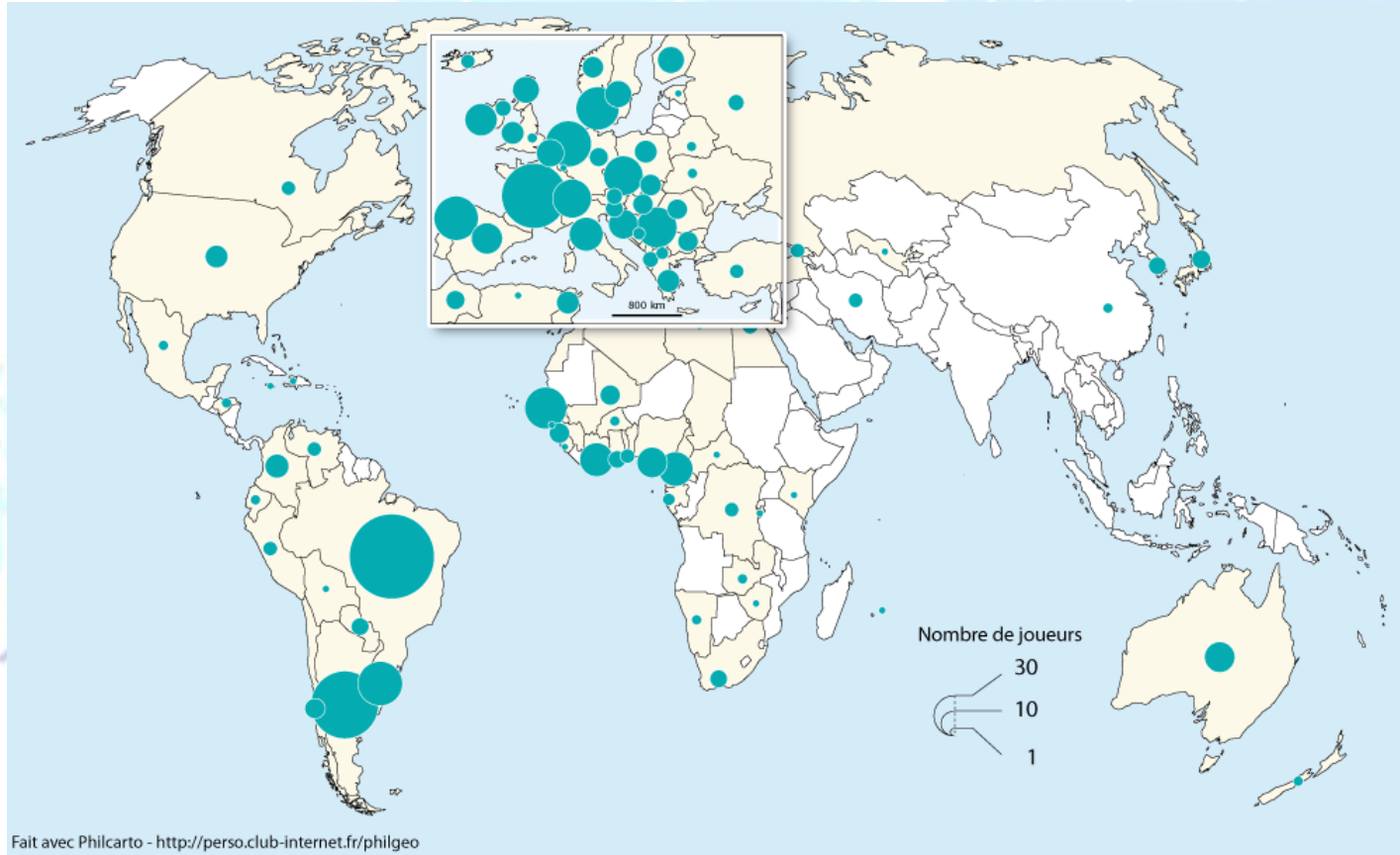


**Percentage of foreign players: 20.2 % Number of countries: 72**



# Foreign Players in the “big five” European Leagues

## The foreign presence in Europe (2005/2006)



**Percentage of foreign players: 38.6 % Number of countries: 93**





# Foreign Players in the “big five” European Leagues

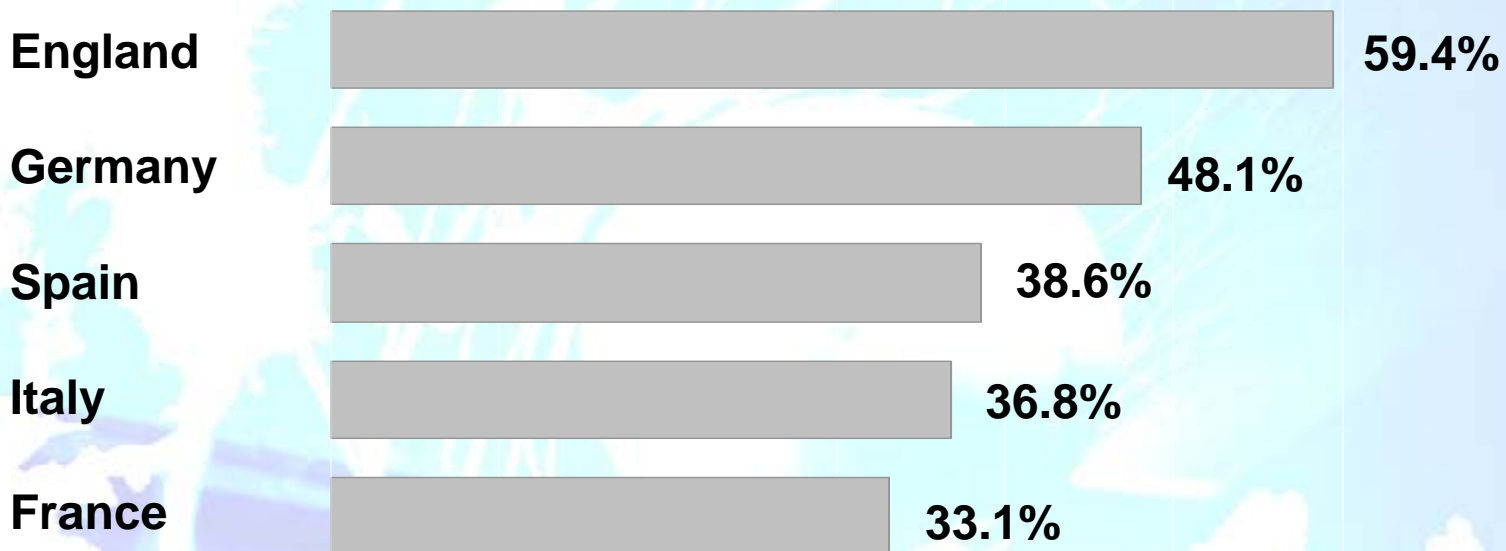
## Some further statistics

- ✓ The percentage of foreign players in top European clubs is still on the rise (43.1% for the first semester of the current season)
- ✓ Top clubs (48.2%) have a higher percentage of foreign players in their squad than the middle (38.3%) and the bottom ranked ones (30.7%).
- ✓ Foreigners account for 48.6% of forwards, 38.7% of midfielders, 37.8% of defenders and 23.6% of goalkeepers.
- ✓ The discrepancies are also important according to the leagues taken into account.



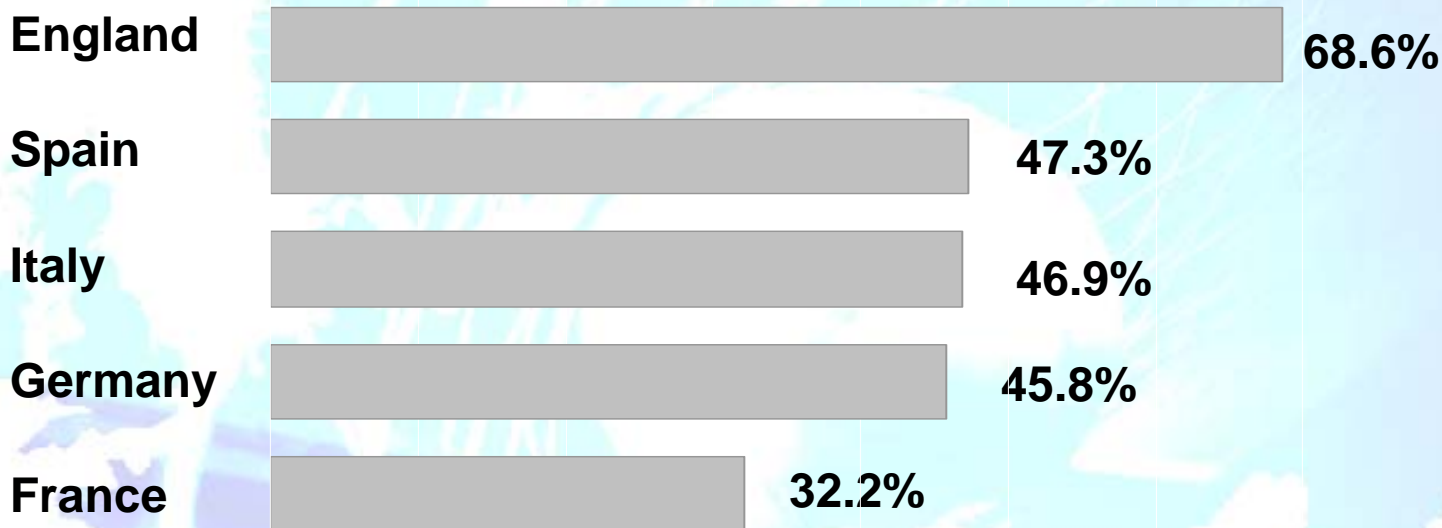
# The English case compared to the other top leagues

Percentage of foreign players in clubs' squads (2007-2008)



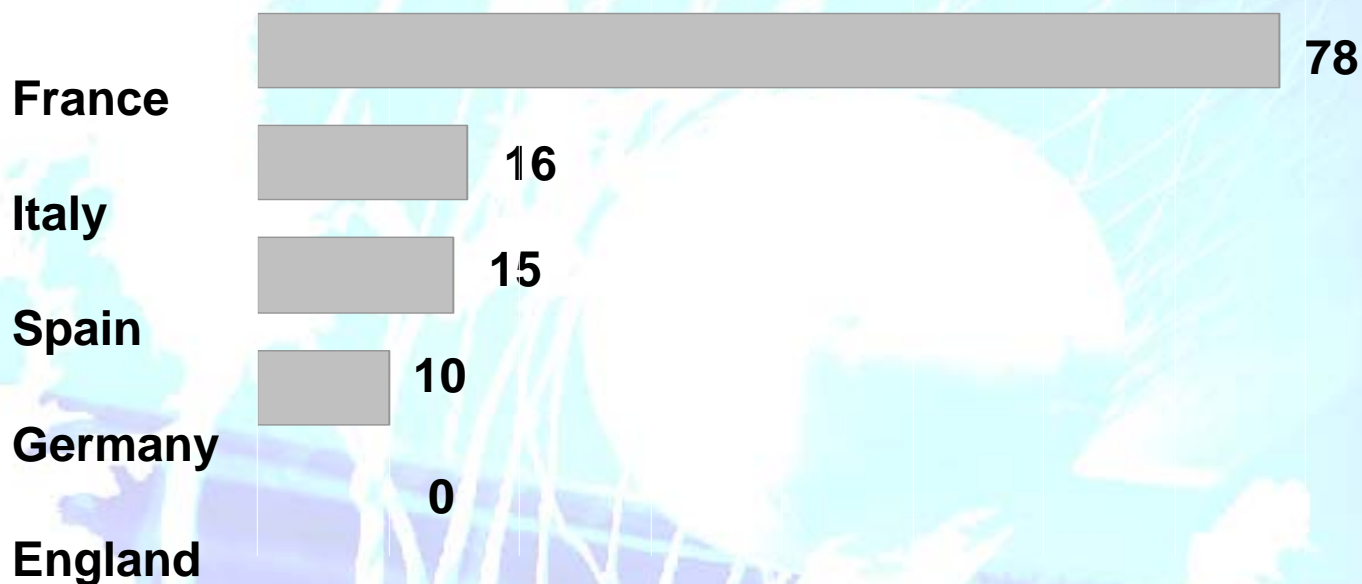
# The English case compared to the other top leagues

Percentage of foreign players in the five best ranked clubs (2006-2007)



# The English case compared to the other top leagues

Number of players who play in as a foreigner in another top European league (2007-2008)



*Does England have enough players to build up a strong national team?*



# Does England have enough players to build up a strong national team?

## Number of footballers playing for the country under contract with a club of the 'big five' leagues (2006-2007)

*at least one match in the 'A' national team*

1. Italy	92
2. Spain	74
<b>3. England</b>	<b>67</b>
4. Brazil	61
5. Germany	60
6. France	59
7. Argentina	50
8. Senegal	30
9. Netherlands	27
10. Uruguay	26
Cameroon	26



# Does England have enough players to build up a strong national team?

## Number of footballers playing for the country under contract with a top\* club of the 'big five' leagues (2006-2007)

*at least one match in the 'A' national team*

1. Brazil	39
2. Italy	38
3. Germany	32
4. France	32
5. Spain	32
<b>6. England</b>	<b>28</b>
7. Argentina	21
8. Netherlands	12
9. Sweden	11
Portugal	11

\* The category "top" refers to the best five ranked clubs of each league.



# Does England have enough players to build up a strong national team?

Average number of matches played by full international players in top clubs of the 'big five' leagues (2006-2007)

1. Portugal	27.7
2. Spain	26.8
3. Netherlands	26.0
4. France	25.0
5. Italy	24.4
<b>6. England</b>	<b>24.1</b>
7. Brazil	23.8
8. Sweden	23.3
9. Germany	22.4
10. Argentina	22.2

Only countries with at least ten representatives have been taken into account.



# Does England have enough players to build up a strong national team?

Number of full international players in top clubs of the 'big five' leagues by position (2006-2007)

	<i>Goalkeepers</i>	<i>Defenders</i>	<i>Midfielders</i>	<i>Forwards</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Brazil</i>	2	18	13	6	39
<i>Italy</i>	2	15	14	7	38
<i>Spain</i>	2	10	14	6	32
<i>France</i>	1	12	12	7	32
<i>Germany</i>	4	9	13	6	32
<b><i>England</i></b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>Argentina</i>	0	9	8	4	21
<i>Netherlands</i>	1	3	3	5	12
<i>Sweden</i>	1	2	3	5	11
<i>Portugal</i>	0	5	4	2	11



Only countries with at least ten representatives have been taken into account.



# Conclusion

- ✓ The presence of foreign players in England is higher than elsewhere in Europe. This fact and the absence of English players abroad provokes a decrease in the number of footballers eligible for England playing in the top European clubs.
- ✓ This reduction has not yet reached a size which could by itself explain the recent poor results of the English national team.
- ✓ The introduction of quotas to favour national players would not be a sufficient measure to better the level of the English national team. The quality of the training of local footballers has also to be increased as it has been done in France.
- ✓ It would also be necessary to put in place rules that encourage clubs, even the richest ones, to train and employ young footballers instead of speculating in the transfer market in collusion with players' agents and other intermediaries whose revenues are directly linked to the trade of footballers.
- ✓ The introduction of an independent structure checking international transfers in order to avoid money laundering and embezzlement would be a good way to slow down the speculation on foreign players and incentivise the development of young local talent.



**Thank you very much for your attention**

**For any request: [raffaele.poli@unine.ch](mailto:raffaele.poli@unine.ch)  
[eurofootplayers@unine.ch](mailto:eurofootplayers@unine.ch)**

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